

BALTIMORE MEETING OF THE AMERICAN  
CHEMICAL SOCIETY.

BY CHARLES PLATT.

AFTER a rather dark period in its history, the American Chemical Society has now attained a firm footing, and has become what it has ever aimed to be, a truly national representation of American chemists. The summer meeting in Chicago and the recent Baltimore meeting have been extraordinarily successful, not only in papers presented, which are, after all, very secondary attractions, but more particularly in the establishment of those feelings of good fellowship and esteem which can only be born of personal acquaintance. During the last meeting this sentiment was expressed many times, and there was a universal feeling of congratulation and good-will, which made the meeting extremely satisfactory. The general verdict seemed to be that the time allotted was too short, and that a programme extending over three or four days, instead of the two provided by custom, would have been more suitable. The meeting convened Dec. 27, 1893, in the lecture-room of the chemical department of Johns Hopkins University, with President H. W. Wiley in the chair. President D. C. Gilman welcomed the society to the University, and Prof. Ira Remsen performed the same office in behalf of the chemical department. In response, President Wiley returned thanks for the society for the welcome so kindly extended, and, continuing, spoke of the remarkable growth of the society during the past year, its field in America, and the increasing need of such a bond of union as is provided. Professor Wiley then opened the business of the meeting with his presidential address on "The Relations of Agricultural Chemistry to the Waste and Recovery of Plant Food." Other papers on the programme, read in person or by title, were as follows: "The Widespread Occurrence of Barium and Strontium in Silicate Rocks," W. F. Hillebrand; "The Estimate of Small Amounts of Barium and Strontium in Silicate Analysis," W. F. Hillebrand; "A Plea for Greater Completeness in Chemical Rock Analysis," W. F. Hillebrand; "A Study of the Distribution of the Oleoresins in the *Pinus Palustris*," Omar Carr; "Salicylic Acid in Food," K. P. McElroy; "Utilization or Garbage," Bruno Terne; "Report on the Determination of Atomic Weights Published during 1893," F. W. Clarke; "The Detection of Strychnine in an Exhumed Human Body," W. D. Noyes; "The Importance of the Study of Biochemistry," E. A. de Schweinitz; "Upon Uniformity in Sampling and Assaying Copper Bullion," G. W. Lehmann; "The Preservation and Arrangement of Chemical Abstracts," Thomas M. Chatard; "Notes on the Electro-Metallurgy of Zinc," Charles Platt; "The Phenyl-hydrazen Test for Glucose in Urine," C. E. Pellew; "Expert Testimony," W. P. Mason; "A Description of the Boric Acid Springs in Tuscany," W. P. Mason; "Phosphorus in Steel," C. B. Dudley; "Determination of Phosphorus by the Molybdate Method in the Presence of Arsenic in Iron, Steel and Ores," J. O. Handy; "The Analysis of Malt," J. A. Miller.

\* Other papers not on the programme were presented, among them one by Dr. Thomas Taylor, of Washington, and another by Prof. G. F. Baker, of Philadelphia, who read a memorial to the late T. Sterry Hunt.

In the afternoon the society accepted the invitation of the Baltimore Copper Smelting and Rolling Company, and several profitable hours were spent examining the details of refining at these representative works. A complimentary banquet was enjoyed at the Eutaw House in the evening. On the second day the reading of the papers was continued and the annual business of the so-

cietly transacted. The officers elected for the ensuing year are: President, H. W. Wiley; General Secretary, Albert C. Hale; Treasurer, C. F. McKenna (resigned); Librarian, F. E. Dodge; Directors—C. F. Chandler, P. T. Austen, C. A. Doremus, H. C. Bolton; Council—C. B. Dudley, C. E. Munroe, Wm. McMurtrie, J. H. Appleton. The meeting was brought to a close with a delightful excursion down the river to Sparrows Point, where the works of the Maryland Steel Company were thoroughly inspected.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.

\* \* Correspondents are requested to be as brief as possible. The writer's name is in all cases required as a proof of good faith.

On request in advance, one hundred copies of the number containing his communication will be furnished free to any correspondent.

The editor will be glad to publish any queries consonant with the character of the journal.

## DO EARTH WORMS RAIN DOWN?

THE old-time notion that earth worms, frogs, fish, etc., "rain down" is now seldom mentioned by intelligent people except in the way of ridicule. The sudden appearance of these animals after a shower is, however, a matter of common observation, and I am not aware that any adequate explanation of the phenomenon has ever been given.

I have heretofore mentioned the finding of minnows after a heavy rain in pools and ditches which were dry not long before. As for earth worms, their nature and habits seem to preclude their coming to the surface voluntarily. When dug up and left on top of the ground they seem very uncomfortable and lose no time in burying themselves again, as soon as they can find a spot where the earth is soft enough to penetrate. Of those found after a rain, some are dead, others nearly so, and those which are in motion seem plainly to be seeking a place to burrow. While it would seem to be impossible that they should have come down from above, it is very remarkable that they should come up from below, leaving their dark, earthy home to be pelted by the rain, which seems so disastrous to them. Besides, they are often found in situations which they could not have reached from the earth, as in tightly cemented cisterns, closed with no opening except where the water pipe enters from the roof. Have those found drowned in rain barrels committed suicide by crawling up the side of the barrel and thence into the water? By the way, who can vouch for their ability to climb a vertical surface in that way?

This morning, after a shower, I found several earth worms near the middle of a street paved with asphalt. There was no crack or crevice in the pavement, and it connected smoothly, on each side, with a curbstone six-and-a-half inches high. It would seem entirely contrary to nature for them to leave the soft earth, climb over the curbstone and make the long journey to the middle of the street.

I have no theory or explanation to offer. My relation to the subject is merely that of an interested observer. I would be glad if others would contribute their observations, with a view to arriving at the true explanation.

CHARLES B. PALMER.

Columbus, Ohio.

## LATE-BLOOMING TREES.

DR. WALTER MENDELSON inquires in *Science* for Dec. 15, 1893, as to "cause and effects of late-blooming of fruit trees." The fruit buds of pears, peaches, apples and cherries are formed during the late summer and early autumn. If there should be warm, damp weather in the autumn, premature blossoming is frequently caused, and the result is the fruit crop of the following

season is diminished in proportion, as, of course, no new buds can be formed.

This late blooming is not at all uncommon, although I do not remember having noticed any as early as September. One season in the first week of November the pear trees in the garden were quite white with blossoms, but unfortunately I cannot recall the year.

Dr. Mendelson may enjoy a very pretty bouquet in February or March by placing in water in a sunny window the fruit-bearing branches of pears, apples or cherries; in a short time they will develop their beautiful and fragrant blossoms.

F. J. THOMPSON.

New Brighton, Staten Island.

#### A CORRECTION.

*Science* is so generally exact in following copy that I must have left out one important word in a recent communication. I should have said that the *early* Iroquois had no council wampum. When the Dutch came they obtained it fast enough, but it is found on no earlier sites in their territory. The later ones have furnished it in abundance.

I wish to record the occurrence of the thick-billed guillemot in this part of New York. A young one was shot on the Seneca River, at Baldwinsville, Dec. 15, 1893. It has not been reported so far inland before. Two species of cormorant have been shot on Onondaga Lake, and I heard that a pelican was recently killed there, but have not seen it.

W. M. BEAUCHAMP.

Baldwinsville, N. Y., Dec. 28, 1893.

#### LATE-BLOOMING TREES.

TREES or shrubs if stripped of their foliage during the summer will put out new buds and new leaves and blossoms. It is a common saying with farmers that when a tree blossoms in the fall it is about to die, which is generally the case, as it mostly occurs on diseased trees. On such a tree the leaves will often turn yellow and fall off during a dry summer. The later rains will put a little new life into it, and it will often put forth buds and blossom. The same occurs if healthy trees are stripped of their foliage during the summer.

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The phenomenon of "the late blossoming of trees," referred to by Dr. Walter Mendelson in *Science* of Dec. 15, 1893, was observed here. During the latter part of September and the first of October great numbers of fruit trees were in bloom, and on many green fruit set and grew; but they all occurred in the track of a severe hail storm which in August passed over a strip of country about half-a-mile in width, cutting the foliage completely from the trees. Possibly Brielle and Alpine, N. J., were in the track of that hail storm.

THOMAS S. STEVENS.

Trenton, N. J., Dec. 28, 1893.

#### AS TO FEIGNED DEATH IN SNAKES.

WHILE on a trip to the Bad Lands in northwest Nebraska and South Dakota in the summer of 1892, collections of rattlesnakes were made. Being much interested in the recent articles on "Feigned Death in Snakes," I have the following statement to make: Whenever a freshly captured rattlesnake was introduced in the box with the former captures it usually vented its rage on them by striking and biting. No ill effects whatever ensued. Also, when teased, the snakes would bite one another. We lost no rattlesnakes whatever on the trip. We often teased the snakes before capture, and in not one instance did they show any tendency to feign death.

H. H. EVERETT.

Lincoln, Neb., Dec. 27, 1893.

#### THE LEAST BITTERN.

LAST summer a wounded bittern, the smallest of them all, *Botaurus exilis*, came into the grounds of the New York State Fishery Commission, at this place, and as its wing was hanging down one of my men caught it and amputated the wing. It remained and fished in a swampy bit of land where the minnows are plenty, in a pool fed by tide water, and promises to winter there. Its habit of remaining motionless when I approach it slowly and in plain sight is interesting, perched on a stick, or standing in the mud with its neck drawn up close and bill pointed upward. I can go within two

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